

Cowlitz County

Protecting Jobs and
Increasing Job Opportunities:

Channel Deepening:

Each year, about 2,000 ocean-going ships transit the Columbia River, carrying \$12.5 billion in imports and exports and generating thousands of jobs in our region. To preserve those jobs and keep our economy strong, during his first year in office Rep. Baird helped secure federal authorization for the \$180 million dollar channel deepening of the Columbia River. Since then, he has obtained \$2 million in appropriations for the Army Corps of Engineers to begin ecosystem restoration features of the project. Working together with Senator Patty Murray, he recently secured \$9 million to begin the deepening work itself.

Steelscape:

When international steel trade agreements threatened the viability of the Steelscape mill in Kalama, Congressman Baird stepped in to protect hundreds of local, family wage jobs. Working with the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), Baird secured exclusions on imported steel for use in the Kalama plant and secured a tariff exclusion for Steelscape. This will result in savings of over \$2 million for the company, allowing the company to expand its operations, creating more jobs in Cowlitz County.

Longview Aluminum:

Southwest Washington is not immune to corporate abuse of employees and customers. When parent company, Michigan Avenue Partners (MAP) and Longview Aluminum agreed not to take power from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) during the 2001 energy price crisis in the Northwest, the company laid off hundreds of workers. Congressman Baird met with the displaced workers and then contacted BPA, Longview Aluminum, McCook Metals, and Alcoa to encourage the companies to live up to their contractual obligations to their former employees. As a result, many of the employees received severance package benefits.

Unfortunately, MAP declared bankruptcy before it ever produced an ingot of aluminum, but after taking more than \$200 million from Northwest electricity ratepayers. Congressman Baird has called for an investigation of this and is now working with the federal Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation to assist other former Longview Aluminum workers. Congressman Baird also contacted BPA to ensure that the money paid to MAP during the power shut down is accounted for accurately.

Sardine Fishery:

Congressman Baird, along with Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, protected sardine fishery jobs in Pacific and Cowlitz Counties by urging the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) to increase the allowable allocation of the sardine fishery to Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. As a result, the PFMC increased the allocation of the sardine fishery to our region preventing the loss of seasonal workers, creating new jobs, and encouraging business expansion and development in Southwest Washington.

Raspberry Farmers:

When the price of raspberries dropped and local raspberry farmers faced unfair market competition from international suppliers, Congressman Baird helped secure \$10.11 million for Washington state as part of a national specialty crop bailout, which provided as much as \$125,000 per farm. Many farmers and their families were facing difficult financial choices and the funding helped them keep their farms.

Improving Transportation and Reducing Congestion:

State Route 432:

Congressman Baird, working with Senator Patty Murray, secured \$2 million for improvements to the State Route 432 interchange at I-5. The project will install dual left turn lanes, traffic signal modifications and the beginning of the existing two-way left turn lane east of Columbia Blvd. The addition of these lanes will reduce the congestion that currently burdens both highways and railways.

Previously, Congressman Baird helped secure \$1 million for the I-5/SR-432 Interchange Added Access Decision Report. This study will identify improvements to be made to the interchange to increase public safety and enhance multi-modal traffic to and from the Port of Longview.

Lexington Bridge:

Congressman Baird helped secure \$6 million to construct a bridge that crosses the Cowlitz River between Interstate 5 (I-5) at milepost 42 and the Sparks Drive/State Route 411 (SR-411) intersection in the Lexington area, north of the cities of Kelso and Longview. This bridge will enable area residents in Lexington to directly access

I-5, relieving traffic that now must transit through residential areas to gain access to the freeway. The bridge also will allow for the redevelopment of West Kelso, where SR-4 and SR-411 intersect.

Port of Longview:

In order to increase freight mobility for goods being shipped to and from the Port of Longview and to enhance public safety, Congressman Baird helped secure a \$2 million grant for the Port of Longview to fund improvements to its Industrial Rail Corridor. The \$2 million represents the last piece of a \$20 million package for the rail corridor to serve the 300 acre industrial park next to the Port. The added infrastructure investment will make the Port more attractive for new industries and businesses to locate in Cowlitz County bringing more jobs and economic development to the area.

Increasing Public Safety and Combating Crime:

Methamphetamine:

As the founder of the Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine Congressman Baird has worked diligently to provide Washington communities with funding to fight the production and use of methamphetamine. Congressman Baird's efforts led to the inclusion of Clark, Cowlitz, and Lewis Counties in the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program. Through this program, and the Congressman's leadership on the statewide Washington State Methamphetamine Initiative, more than \$11 million in Federal dollars have come to our region to combat methamphetamine use and clean meth contaminated sites.

Improving Federal Law Enforcement:

As Southwest Washington communities continue their rapid growth, we must make sure that law enforcement framework is in place to deter crime and hold criminals accountable for their actions. Local law enforcement approached Congressman Baird with concerns that a greater federal law enforcement presence was needed in Southwest Washington. With recent growth, Clark County became the fifth largest in our state, yet the surrounding region had no full-time federal magistrate or prosecutor to investigate serious federal crimes such as bank robbery and other offenses. The nearest federal district court and U.S. Assistant Attorney from which a warrant could be obtained was in Tacoma, 140 miles north of Vancouver. Because of this difficulty, federal crimes committed in Southwest Washington were often prosecuted under state or local laws, and at lower numbers, failing to hold criminals fully accountable for crimes they committed.

Congressman Baird worked with local law enforcement officials and the U.S. Attorney for Western Washington to bring an enhanced federal law enforcement presence to Southwest Washington. On November 10, 2003 the Federal Investigative Center officially opened in Vancouver. The new center provides a centralized office for federal agents from the U.S. Marshals Service; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF); Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Postal Inspection Service into a single Vancouver headquarters. By having a single, coordinated location to work from in our area, these agencies can share information and resources and will be much more successful in pursuing cases.

Emergency 911 Radio Communications Equipment:

Following the tragedy of September 11, 2001, Congressman Baird met with many first responders, law enforcement officers, and emergency managers to identify additional security measures needed to enhance the protection of people and infrastructure in Southwest Washington. As a result, Congressman Baird helped secure \$350,000 for Cowlitz County's emergency services and law enforcement agencies to assist in replacing the county's aging emergency response radio system. Parts of the existing warning system are more than 25 years old and are at risk of failing without warning. The replacement would be a 4-site, 8-channel 150 MHz system, which would allow countywide coverage on all channels. The sites would be linked by microwave to enhance reliability.

Mount St. Helens:

To protect the safety of communities located near Mount Saint Helens, Congressman Baird worked to secure an additional \$1.5 million for the United States Geological Survey to monitor and research volcanic activity in Mount St. Helens. As Mount Saint Helens has come back to life in recent months, this funding will increase the safety of citizens living near the area and help protect commercial aircraft.

Previously, Congressman Baird helped secure \$375,000 to control sediment flows in the Cowlitz and Toutle Rivers. Following the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980, sediment control on these rivers became necessary to protect infrastructure, homes, and the environment. Without measures to control the sediment, millions of dollars in damage to private property and public infrastructure could take place. Given the recent seismic activity of Mount St. Helens, Congressman Baird remains concerned about sediment control and continues to monitor the situation and work closely with the Corps of Engineers to ensure public safety.

Making Government More Effective and Efficient:

Streamlining the environmental permitting process:

Protecting the environment is always a priority, but regulatory processing and permitting have become unnecessarily costly and time consuming. In recent years, Congressman Baird has organized a series of meetings throughout Southwest Washington to bring local business leaders, farmers, builders, ports and others together with federal, state and local officials to improve the permitting process. As a direct result, several federal and state agencies have made significant progress in streamlining permits, reducing application backlogs and complexity, and improving coordination to expedite the process. There is still work to be done, and much room for improvement, but Congressman Baird will continue to work with the consumers of permits and agency representatives to push for further improvements in efficiency and savings in time and money.

Port of Kalama:

The Port of Kalama contacted Congressman Baird when it was having difficulty obtaining a routine maintenance dredging permit. Without dredging, the port would have been too shallow to provide service to deep draft vessels causing the port to shut down, lose large vessel business, and hundreds of longshore and other jobs. Congressman Baird and Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell contacted NOAA Fisheries and were successful in expediting the permit. As a result, the port was able to complete maintenance dredging on time, protecting hundreds of jobs.

Woodland Grant:

The City of Woodland applied for a Housing and Urban Development (HUD)/Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) of \$300,000 to help fund a new water treatment plant. The City also applied for a HUD/CDBG for \$65,000 to help fund the installation of a pipe system. The City was awarded the grants, but faced some administrative red tape and the grant funding was delayed approximately three years. The City contacted Congressman Baird to ask for assistance in obtaining the grant funding. Congressman Baird contacted the agencies and was able to expedite the release of funds to reimburse the City of Woodland.

Expediting Fish Recovery Projects:

When Fish First, a non-profit volunteer group dedicated to restoring our fish habitat and runs, encountered persistent delays and difficulties in getting permits to conduct their stream restoration and culvert replacement projects, Congressman Baird personally visited their projects and saw the great work they do. A fisherman himself, the Congressman offered to help and brought Fish First members together with the regulatory agency to find a solution. As a result, the projects were approved and Fish First obtained a first of its kind permit allowing them to do many future projects on a much more rapid and expedited timetable. Most importantly of all, fish counts that once showed relatively few returning fish now count in the tens of thousands with returning numbers and reds growing every year.

Protecting Mental Health Care:

Mental Health Care under Medicaid:

For the past 11 years Washington state has used federal Medicaid funds in conjunction with state funds to provide mental health care to Medicaid eligible patients as well as to patients who need service but do not qualify for Medicaid. In April 2004, the federal agency that oversees Medicaid and Medicare, CMS, required that, effective January 1, 2005, the state cease using their Medicaid funds to serve patients who do not qualify for Medicaid. This change, which came at a time the State Legislature was out of session and could not meet to solve the problem, threatened to suddenly terminate mental health care for 40,000 patients across our state.

As a former clinical psychologist who has worked in community mental clinics, Congressman Baird understands the importance of mental health care in our communities. With the proper sustained treatment, people who would otherwise be debilitated by their illness can be functioning, contributing members of society. When he learned of the proposed rule change by CMS and the potential loss of treatment for patients in need, Congressman Baird took immediate action.

After consulting with members of the legislature and state agencies, Congressman Baird personally contacted administrators at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The Congressman drew upon his own professional background to explain the needs of the patients and the harm that could result from terminating their services. He then requested an extension be granted to give the state time to arrange alternative funding to continue the care. To their great credit, officials within CMS were willing to work closely with the Congressman and the state and in late December a six month waiver was granted, extending care through June 2005. This measure will save the state of Washington over \$20 million and, more importantly, will allow 40,000 of our citizens to continue to receive the care and treatment they need to be productive, functioning members of our communities.

Cowlitz
County

City
of Longview

City
of Kelso

City
of Kalama

City
of Castle Rock

City
of Woodland

Port
of Longview

Port
of Kalama

Port
of Woodland

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum
Council of Governments

Kelso-Longview
Chamber of Commerce

Woodland
Chamber of Commerce

Cowlitz
County Economic Development Council

Cowlitz
County Tourism Department

The
Daily News

Lower
Columbia College

Educational
Service District 112

Lewis
and Clark Expedition

Washington
State Government Information & Services